

PROTEST AND REMONSTRANCE.

TO THE CHRISTIAN ABOLITIONISTS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND WHO MET AT FREEMASONS' HALL, LONDON, AUGUST 19, 1846, TO FORM AN EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.

The Protest and Remonstrance of the Executive Committee of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society against the course pursued by them on the question of American Slavery.

BELOVED FRIENDS:

We have learned that measures are in progress, both in your country and in ours, to give an imposing and permanent influence to the doings of the Convention, by means of a wide-spreading and well-compacted organization, uniting Evangelical Christians of every name and nation, who agree to the doctrinal basis of of the Alliance. The character of the Convention itself, and the nature of its transactions, impel us to a candid and and faithful examination of the bearing of the Alliance upon the system of measures which are in operation to effect, by moral and religious means, the peaceful and speedy abolition of American slavery. We cannot doubt your readiness to give an equally candid attention to the considerations which we feel bound to lay before you.

For a long time, we have been engaged in the Anti-Slavery enterprise, and in view of the many difficulties with which we have to contend, and the immense

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benefits which success cannot fail to produce, we consider this as the *great work of the present age*. It is a work which can only be accomplished through the power of the Gospel: no other principles are potent enough to overcome so mighty an evil. From the beginning, we have been sensible that the first thing to be done, is to enlist the consciences of men on the side of the slave, by producing a general conviction of the inherent injustice of slavery, and the consequent sinfulness of the act of holding a fellow-man in that condition. But we do not believe it possible to produce, in any community, a general conviction of the inherent sinfulness of a practice which is allowed by the great body of ministers and professing Christians of that community.

The great difficulty in the way of our reaching the public mind with convictions of the truth on this subject is, that from the beginning of the anti-slavery enterprise, it has been the settled policy of the leading denominations of Christians in this country to let slavery alone. They have acted on the policy of preaching the Gospel, planting churches, and administering the institutions of Christ, in their several modes, taking no notice of the existing relation of masters and slaves, except to employ the sanctions of religion in enforcing the obedience of the slave; while they quiet the conscience of the master, by the assurance that his continuing in that relation may be consistent with his good standing as a Christian. They, indeed, for the most part have had an undefined hope that, by some means, in some distant age, the Gospel is to abolish slavery. But, practically, they did nothing, and aimed at nothing, towards this end. And the result has been that the Gospel, thus preached, has failed either to secure the overthrow of slavery, or prevent its increase; so that now, after seventy years

of our national existence, notwithstanding emancipation in the northern States, the system has extended its power, increased its arrogance, and more than quadrupled the number of its victims.

The effect of this policy has been to weaken the moral sense of the people in regard to the wrongfulness of slavery; and out of it has very naturally arisen the anxious desire, on the part of most of our leading ecclesiastical men, to preserve this policy, and not to have the question of slavery pressed upon their attention in such a way as to interrupt the union and harmony of their religious organizations. They *pitied* the slave for his hard lot; they *felt* that slavery was an evil; they *desired* to see it abolished; but they would not hazard their "Christian union," or the "peace of the Church," by any efforts to free the slave. And as the slaveholders with whom they were connected, continually declared, that *any* attempt to meddle with the subject of slavery would be fatal to their unity, it has been only by the most strenuous and determined means that it has ever been practicable to awaken, even a slight inquiry, concerning the path of Christian duty towards the slave.

Yet, by the blessing of God upon the efforts of abolitionists, during a series of years, there has been a marked advance in public opinion. Among the influences which aided this progress, the cause was greatly indebted to the firmness and fidelity of British Christians, in requiring from their American visitants, as a preliminary to the free enjoyment of Christian fellowship and intercourse, the assurance of their zealous adhesion to the anti-slavery cause.

Slaveholders, and those who were resolved to maintain fellowship with them, saw the increasing rigor of this rule of our British brethren, and felt that a great effort was needed to neutralize its power. It

was evidently necessary to produce a separation between Christians in Great Britain and the Abolitionists this country. Hence in the Convention, the American members pertinaciously adhered to the policy which has been so successful in the religious bodies of this country—to wit, to magnify the object of union, and then insist that union is impossible save on the condition of letting slavery alone. By doing this, they could at once neutralize the influence which British Christians were exerting against American slavery, and even employ that influence, as they have always employed the influence of a large number of American professors of religion, to oppose the efforts now made for the immediate abolition of slavery in this country. We do not affirm that the original conception of the Convention embraced this view. The result is a matter of history; and its effect, unless counteracted, will be so disastrous in its bearings on the Anti-Slavery cause, that a strong conviction of duty impels us to put forth this earnest and fraternal remonstrance.

The brethren in Great Britain were apprehensive that the meeting would be used to subserve the objects of slaveholders; whereupon, the "Aggregate Committee," so early as March last, resolved that no slaveholder should be invited to attend the Convention; and in July, the "London division" "Resolved, that the minute with respect to slaveholding—be put before brethren—from all countries whose governments tolerate the practice." A large number of American members verbally protested against this action; and signed a formal explanation declarative of their purpose and duty "to maintain intimate relations with "Christian slaveholders;" and when the Convention itself proposed to adopt the rule of the "Aggregate Committee" excluding slaveholders, the American

delegates strenuously resisted it, and nearly broke up the Convention by their opposition. It ended, as such attempts have always ended in this country, by yielding to slavery all that was demanded on its behalf; to wit, that nothing should be done by the Convention in relation to it. They preserved their union by letting slavery alone.

Again, when the Convention came to settle the terms of membership of the proposed Ecumenical Alliance, there were members, who, knowing the manner in which American slavery has entrenched itself behind the altar, deemed it necessary that there should be a specific provision to guard the Alliance itself from being made a new stronghold for that great wickedness. A motion was therefore made to add to the specifications of the conditions of membership, the words, "not being slaveholders." The Convention being anxious to concede, as far as possible, to the views of the American brethren, modified the rule so as to provide that "*no slaveholders, who by their own fault continue such*, retaining their fellow-men in slavery out of regard to their own interests, should be received as members."

This cautious modification of the testimony against slavery we feel bound to disapprove, because it concedes to the slaveholders the assumption with which they are accustomed to repel every approach to their conscience: "We hold the slaves solely for their good;" "the laws forbid emancipation;" "so many of best Christians hold slaves;" therefore, "slavery is to be let alone." And it *is* let alone by the great body of professed Christians and ministers of this country; thus effectually employing a supposable exception to overthrow a great rule, and protect a giant sin against the slightest censure.

But the concession failed to satisfy the American

brethren, who, we are told, "refused an inch of compromise." They, doubtless, saw the advantage they had already gained, and feared that their assent to any action whatever, against slavery, would stand in the way of their declared purpose of continuing to maintain their religious relations with slaveholders at home. They, therefore, with one or two noble exceptions, united in so firm and determined a resistance, that the Convention at length gave way; and to appease the spirit of the American members, agreed to reconsider their vote and rescind everything they had done on the subject of slavery; thereby virtually admitting one of two conclusions: either that slavery, as it exists in the United States, is not such an evil in itself, nor such an obstacle to the progress of Christianity, as to come properly under the cognizance of this grand Ecumenical council—or else, that it is an evil of such magnitude, and so incorporated with the Christian institutions of the age, that the represented religion of the Protestant world dare not grapple with it. On either supposition, it is impossible to regard the result in any other light than as an open triumph of slavery over the religious principles of the age.

This termination was brought about by means with which we in America are, alas! but too well acquainted—by the very same means that have been used, from the beginning of the history of emancipation, to obtain for slavery all that it requires, both in civil and religious associations; to wit, by strong professions of fraternal sympathy and confidence, accompanied with threats of *dissolving the Union* unless slavery is let alone. Said a very distinguished member of the American delegation, whose profession of fraternity has been most ardent, "Unless this [slavery] was an open question" [that is, unless slavery was let

alone by the Convention, and the Americans left to act upon it without anything being said about it,] better let us at once dissolve." This was simply the old threat of disunion, with which we in America are so familiar, both in religious and political matters; and this threat prevailed in England, just as it has always prevailed in America, bringing its subjects to yield precisely the thing that slavery demanded, to wit, that slaveholding should not be a barrier to Christian fellowship.

Christian faithfulness requires us to say that, according to our honest judgment, you were misled by the anti-slavery professions of the American members. They told you they were anti-slavery men; they uttered strong denunciations of the evils of slavery; they magnified the difficulties of emancipation; they even promised to take earnest hold of the subject of slavery on their return, declaring that if British Christians would let it alone—if the Convention would say nothing about it—their hands would be greatly strengthened to employ the power of the Gospel to overthrow slavery in the United States.

Now we do not hesitate to affirm our conviction, that just so far as you acted under a belief of these assertions you were deceived. These gentlemen did not represent the *active and effective* Christian anti-slavery feeling of the United States. They were the representatives of the leading influences of this country, both ecclesiastical and political; of those classes who have endeavored to keep down the discussion of slavery, in all circles, on account of its interference with their policy and union. They represented that portion of the wealth, the honors, the learning, the benevolent societies, the leading denominations, who have ever used their influ-

ence against the anti-slavery movement in this country. They represented the dead weights which abolitionists have for fifteen years been trying to move, and which, by the blessing of God, we are beginning to move; and their object was to add the weight of the influence of evangelical Christians throughout the Protestant world in favor of their let-alone policy.

We believe the result will show that your confidence has been abused, if you have been led to suppose that they have come home prepared to *do anything* effectual towards making the Gospel instrumental in overthrowing slavery. Such as they were before going to your country, such they will remain, anxious to exculpate themselves from the suspicion of being favorable to slavery, but never finding how they may do anything against it. They would do nothing in the Convention, because that was not the place; they will do nothing in any ecclesiastical assembly, because that is not the place; they will do nothing in any benevolent society, because that is not the place; and most of them will do nothing in the pulpit because that is not the place. They will do nothing religiously, because slavery is political; and they will do nothing politically, because slavery is religious. If a meeting is called either of ministers and church members, or of citizens generally, to consider the subject of slavery, few of these men are ever found mingling in its councils, or shedding the light of their wisdom on its path.

Different parties have given very different explanations of the actual position and bearing of the final action of the Convention. The Rev. Dr. Reed, of London, deemed the proceeding so objectionable that he felt constrained, by a sense of duty, to withdraw from the Alliance on this account. In his published

letter, he thus describes the case : "The Conference resolved unanimously, and under a strange ecstasy of mind, that slavery may be not only *legal*, but *right* ; not only *right*, but, in certain circumstances, *beneficial* even to the slave. They afterwards met to rescind that resolution, not, be it observed, to meet the wishes of a small British party, who might have thought, on reflection, that it yielded too much as against the slave ; but to satisfy a *controlling* party, who thought that it *yielded too little* ! And, finally, it stultified itself, by agreeing to expunge its own minutes, and to persuade itself and the public, that it had taken *no action* on a subject in which, in fact, it had been more deeply engaged than any other."

It must be deemed unfortunate, that the Convention should have left its doings in a position where such a construction can be reasonably put on them. On the other hand, the Rev. Dr. Wardlaw, of Glasgow, a man equally venerable and equally sincere in his devotion, both to the objects of the Convention and to the cause of Emancipation, thinks the final position of the Convention the best that could be taken. He says the Alliance "has nothing to do with either slavery or slaveholders. It is uncontaminated by either ; it has repudiated both." It has "given no sanction to slavery or slaveholding." He says, "The declaration goes forth to the world that, in consequence of the existence among our trans-Atlantic brethren of these evils, the Alliance has been actually prevented from forming and settling its general organization ; that these evils have rendered the suspension of this measure necessary ; that *American Christianity must be subjected to trial* in this particular, before British Christianity can fully and cordially co-operate with it under one organization."

“The different branches of it, according to the existing resolution, are, in their organization and responsibility, entirely independent of one another. The American brethren, therefore, *are upon their trial*. No act of theirs can become the act of the Alliance, without the recognition of the other branches. If, therefore, they are found to introduce slaveholders into the Alliance, in their branch of it, we are neither answerable for the act, nor bound by it. The repudiation of the deed will then become our duty, and separation from those by whom the pollution has been wilfully contracted.”

It cannot be denied that the Convention, in forming the Alliance, included as members the American brethren who declared their intention to hold fellowship with slaveholders; nor that this position was taken for the express purpose of retaining them as members; nor that they, in the final resolutions of the Convention, were empowered to act, with these known views, as the committee and representatives of the Convention, in constituting the American district organization; nor that they act as much in the name and behalf, and by the authority of the Alliance, in forming the American organization, with slaveholders admitted, as the British section will, in forming the British organization, with slaveholders excluded; nor that, to all correct intendments, their acts will stand as the acts of the Alliance until fully rejected, because they were appointed to perform these very acts with the knowledge that they would not cease to fellowship slaveholders as Christians in good standing. The Alliance, as contemplated by the final vote of the Convention, will consist in part, of those who are resolved, not only to maintain fellowship with slaveholders, but to hold the Alliance in fellowship with them; and these men, with this avowal, are then

empowered to go forward and form an American organization, on the doctrinal basis, and in accordance with their own views of the peculiar circumstances of their district.

Sir Culling Eardley Smith, the chairman of the Convention, states as results of the final action of the Convention :

1. "That the Conference refused to give a diluted testimony against slavery."

2. "That it found it impossible to retain its testimony as it stood ; but that,

3. "It sacrificed to its sense of duty in the matter of slavery, the cherished idea of an immediate, numerous, mutually responsible Ecumenical membership."

This shows how potent the voice of slavery was in the Convention ; that, at its bidding, the most cherished objects were abandoned, solely because they could not be carried out without offending the slaveholders and their American apologists. The Rev. Gorham D. Abbott, of New York, in writing the most full report that has been published by any American delegate, declares that the American brethren went into the Convention disowning the authority of the Birmingham resolutions, as of any binding force. And as to the final result, he declares that "The whole subject of slavery is left out of the constitution of the Alliance, and remains, with other evils with which the world is filled, to be relieved and ultimately remedied in God's appointed way, by the progress of the principles of the Gospel of Christ." He also says, "The way is *left entirely open* for the American churches to form a corresponding Alliance for our own continent under the most happy auspices ;" that is, with the admission of slaveholders. The Rev. Dr. Baird, of New York, writes to the editor of the New

York Evangelist, that much good will result from the "discussion by the American delegates in the Convention, because, whilst all acknowledged and denounced the evils of slavery, they also denounced the folly, the madness, even, of foreigners, and especially Englishmen, interfering with the subject." Of what value can be union or alliance, in which one of the contracting parties maintains, towards the other, the jealousy and defiance indicated by these extracts, denouncing as *madness* any attempt to interfere with an evil which, more than all others in Christendom, stands in the way of the world's conversion? Who can estimate the evil that will result, if evangelical Christians of every name and nation, by uniting with such an alliance, shall testify that slaveholding, the embruting of the image of God, the chattelizing of the representatives of Christ, is not, and *shall not be*, a barrier to Christian fellowship?

We might multiply quotations in proof that the alliance as formed, is hailed in this country, both by slaveholders and those who hold fellowship with them, as a complete triumph of the American policy of building up religious institutions, which shall be precluded, by their very constitution, from bearing an effective testimony against slaveholding. Believing that American slavery is contrary to the Gospel, that it must be abolished by the right application of the principles of the Gospel, and that the policy hitherto pursued by a large portion of the ministers and churches of this country, not only does not tend to abolish slavery, but strengthens and shields the system, we are pained that that policy should have so far prevailed in the London conference, that the influence of British Christians should be made to give it strength.

The final action to which the conference was driven, in order to keep its union with the American brethren,

who were resolved to retain their fellowship with slaveholders, seems to have been this :—

1. That the Alliance, of which the foundation was then laid, should consist of all the members of that conference, who continue to adhere to the doctrinal basis agreed on.

2. That the actual members from each country were constituted a commission to form district organization, in such manner as shall be most in accordance with the peculiar circumstances of each district.

3. That no person, by uniting with a district organization, shall be entitled to the privileges of membership of the Alliance, except by the consent of all the branches, or by the vote of another General Conference, when it shall be held.

Under this provision, the British members have already executed their commission, in a meeting at Manchester, where they formed their district organization. It gives us pleasure to see that the “sober second thought” of British Christians has recoiled from apparent connivance at slavery, and that in pursuance of the course adopted by the Birmingham provisional committee, they have declared that “without pronouncing any judgment on the personal Christianity of slaveholders, no holder of slaves shall be eligible to membership.” They have also declared in addition to the test of “intellectual assent to the summary of doctrine,” that no person shall be admitted unless he is in their judgment “a person of Christian character, spirit and deportment.” We rejoice in this faithful testimony of British piety against slavery, and that herein you held fast your integrity, refusing to yield principle to comity. You have retrieved your error ; but what can be done to extricate the Alliance from its involvement, or to recover the lost opportunity of bringing its power to act in favor of emancipation ? The

American members are as fully empowered to form the American organization, as you were to form the British. If they organize on the basis of the doctrinal agreement settled by the Convention, "in such manner as shall be most in accordance with the peculiar circumstances of (their) district," slaveholders will be admitted. Already preliminary and explanatory meetings have been held to prepare the way for organizing the "American Alliance." In one of these meetings, an American member of the London Conference said he wished slaveholders would not apply for admission, yet, "if five hundred wicked slaveholders should apply, the Alliance could not exclude them." It is worthy of note, that, in these meetings, no notice has been taken of the Manchester meeting, nor of the resolution of the British branch to exclude all slaveholders. We feel an assurance that we have no need to exhort our British brethren never to receive a branch which thus lays its foundation in the blood of the slave! But what then will you do? The Convention, under which the British organization is formed, has authorized the American delegates to organize at their discretion, and no American organization can be regularly formed through any other channel. Will you assist to build a great Protestant Evangelical Alliance, with America left out? Or will you not rather consent to forego your cherished hopes of an organized Alliance of Christian union, until that more auspicious period when the direct influences of the Gospel, which the Christian abolitionists are employing, shall have broken the power of slavery in this country thus to interfere with the choicest developments of Christian fellowship?

Brethren, you have wronged the down-trodden and oppressed, in deferring their claims to these delegates and such as they represent. The monster-evil of the

world requires to be met with firmer resistance. It can never receive its death-wound from the sword of the Spirit, wielded by irresolute hands. There must be no compromise with evil. And until those who are entrusted with the administration of the Gospel and its ordinances acquire sufficient firmness and faith to carry out their adopted principles, and fulfil their cherished designs, yielding nothing to the religious pretensions of slavery, we cannot expect them efficiently to co-operate with Him whose mission was, "To preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bruised."

We see no way, brethren, of retrieving this lost opportunity. The Alliance, by consenting to the policy of the slaveholder, and recommending to its members, including "American brethren," "to form District organizations in such manner as shall be most in accordance with the *peculiar circumstances* of each district," failed to satisfy the exigencies of the times, and lost an opportunity, never to be recovered, of bringing its moral power to bear against the sin of slavery. It is better that no Alliance should exist, than that one should be built up to stand on the prostrate body of the slave, and act as an obstruction to the free course of the gospel in his emancipation. It is impossible that any Christian union should be established on the basis of a connivance at slavery, and an agreed disregard of the cries of the slave. It is impossible that the Alliance thus formed, should, in its further prosecution, compensate for the injury it has done, and will do, to the cause of the Gospel in thus disregarding the cry of the oppressed.

We have put forth this protest in the name and on behalf of that large and increasing body of zealous ministers and Christian brethren, in the United States, whose consistent support of all the institutions and

influences of religion falls behind that of no other class ; and who, at the same time, have taken the responsibility of doing, at great sacrifice, all that is lawfully in their power, to hasten the freedom of the slave. We pray you to appreciate their motives, and to do nothing to weaken their hands, or counteract their efforts, in the most vital point of their whole movement. We entreat you to give them the benefit of your co-operation in the very case, of all others, where you can render most essential aid : to stand by the declared position of British Christians, that the sin of slaveholding ought not to receive any countenance in the name of the Christian religion ; and to say by your acts that you can acknowledge no union, and hold no intercourse, with any branch of the Alliance which shall swerve from this high and holy ground.

ARTHUR TAPPAN,
LEWIS TAPPAN,
WM. JOHNSTON,
WM. E. WHITING,
LUTHER LEE,
S. S. JOCELYN,
CHRISTOPHER RUSH,
ORANGE SCOTT,
WM. LILLIE,
J. WARNER,
THEODORE S. WRIGHT,
WM. JAY,
SAML. E. CORNISH,
S. W. BENEDICT,
R. G WILLIAMS,
ARNOLD BUFFOM.

New York, Jan. 29, 1847.